



CHURCH ONLINE SMALL GROUPS

LEADER GUIDE

WHY CHURCH ONLINE SMALL GROUPS?

THE GATHERING MATTERS

It has never been more important to gather in Small Groups. Gathering with others who know us by name, who are our neighboring brothers and sisters in Christ, to be lifted up in faith by God's Word and pray together, is essential for our spiritual and emotional health in Christ. It is not good for people to be alone. "Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another...." Hebrew 10:24-25 NRSV

Just because we cannot gather large doesn't mean that we cannot gather small. In fact, it's during times like these that we are encouraged in the gospel to continue our gathering and remain constant in participating in the body of Christ. In a world that is currently filled with fear, anxiety, and unknowns, we have a unique opportunity to BE the church. We are confident that Jesus will be as present in our homes as He is when we meet at our 4 church locations.

Our vision for REAL Church Online Small Groups is that every person that calls REAL Church their church home would have the opportunity to step into a home and find a sense of welcome where they can worship together, learn together, build their faith together, increase their hope together, and grow in their relationship with Jesus in genuine community.

In this digital handbook we have outlined practical steps to help you facilitate your Online Church Small Group.

HOW TO LEAD A CHURCH ONLINE SMALL GROUP

In the book of John (21) Jesus is sitting on the beach eating fish over a barbecue and talking with his close friends. They discuss their futures; what they hope for and the things they fear. It's a familiar scene for the band of disciples. Together they'd grown to understand the truths of God's Kingdom, learned to care for one another, were equipped to serve, and grew closer to Jesus.

This scene in the gospel of John illustrates what lies at the core of being a Church Online Small Group Leader. Have you learned something about God's goodness that you can share? Can you befriend people and connect them together in a circle of friendship? Are you able to believe in someone else's potential? Can you encourage someone when they are down? If your answer is yes to any of those questions, then we believe that you are ready to open the door to others and be a group leader!

Leading a group is easier than you might think. Truly successful small groups have one thing in common; a leader with a teachable spirit and a heart to become more like Jesus. Don't let a lack of experience keep you from leading a Church Online Small Group. After 3 years with Jesus, the first leaders of the church, Peter and John, were still considered "unschooled, ordinary men". BUT they had "been with Jesus". (Acts 4:13 NIV) They may have lacked some competencies, but they had the right motivation and hearts, and God used them to change the world!

IT'S EASY AS 1,2,3!

01 GATHER A GROUP

- Invite people into a warm, welcoming environment where group members can worship together and be cared for.
- Gather the team weekly at a consistent time.
- Help people find a place to belong.
- Follow the recommended time line (below).

02 CONNECT A GROUP

- Connect your group to the REAL Church Online content.
- Provide space for people to engage with content, hear teaching, be encouraged, gather in prayer, and continue to be active in their faith during this season.
- Connect with your group throughout the week.
- Connect with your Pastor if needed.

03 DIRECT A GROUP

- Direct those with care needs to realchurch.info/care

LET'S TALK TECH!

It doesn't matter how fancy your technology is. Any streaming device will work.

- VISIT > realchurch.info
- For on demand access: VISIT > realchurch.info | CLICK > Watch a Message

THE BASICS

BE WISE. When you gather in your groups, please make sure:

- No one present is sick or has any reason to think they have been exposed to a virus.
- Shared surfaces are disinfected before and after the gathering.
- Everyone washes their hands upon arrival.
- Refrain from hugs and handshakes but rather offer waves and smiles.

BE WELCOMING. Provide a space where people feel welcomed and a sense of belonging within the group.

BE ENCOURAGING. Build people up and lead conversation in a direction that inspires hope.

BE PRAYERFUL. Lead group members to pray together and to invite God into the situation.

LANGUAGE OF LEADERS

The way we communicate *shapes the choices others make*, and how they approach their own decision-making.

PLEASE AVOID SAYING:

“Everything will be just fine.”

- We don't want to discount people's feelings or thoughts.
- Many people we interact with are going to experience or witness a measure of distress in the coming days and almost certainly they will through the media.
- We do, however, want to help people through their distress and remind them of the truth that God will be present in whatever difficulty they encounter.

“I think you're overreacting” to anxious people.

- People often react to news and rumors in unhelpful ways.
- Regardless of reactions, we should never accuse someone of overreacting as it's often not helpful.
- We should help to instill confidence and hope by encouraging others to put their trust in God.

SPEAK HOPE:

“We're changing our behavior out of love for our neighbors.”

- Altering the way we are gathering is not self-protection and we do not change our behavior out of fear.
- The change is needed because our vulnerable neighbors – those of any age with compromised immune systems and those over 70 years old – are at a higher risk.
- We respect the wisdom of our authority and the limiting of large gatherings by our local leaders.
- We choose to prepare for our anticipated needs, and the needs of others, so that we may eliminate stress and serve others when the time comes.
- It is entirely possible to prepare, even to prepare urgently, out of love.

"Don't be afraid."

- We do not need to be afraid of anything.
- "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Isaiah 41:10 NIV

Remain Positive!

- If a conversation takes a negative or destructive turn, guide it back to a healthy place.
- If someone needs to talk about a sensitive or complex issue, you can follow up with them after the group or contact your Pastor to help you respond well. **VISIT >** realchurch.info/care

TIMELINE

- 15 MIN** - Mingle/Food
- 05 MIN** - Icebreaker
- 05 MIN** - Welcome/Prayer
- 45 MIN** - Video Content
- 05 MIN** - Closing Prayer

TOTAL RUN TIME: 1 hour 15 minutes

ICE-BREAKERS

Help get your group warmed up and laughing together. Pick any one of these to incorporate into your opening.

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS:

- If you could pick up a new skill in an instant what would it be?
- What was your first job?
- What's the best thing that's happened to you this week?
- What's your hidden talent?
- Which office machine is your favorite?
- What's the weirdest food you've ever eaten?
- What sport did you try as a child and fail at?
- If you had to wear a hat every day for the rest of your life, what type of hat would it be?
- What was your first record, tape, or CD that you owned?
- What do you cook better than anyone else?
- Would you rather be able to fly, or be able to breathe underwater?
- Be able to fly anywhere for free anytime you wanted, or have your tab permanently covered at all restaurants?
- As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?
- You can have an unlimited supply of one thing for the rest of your life, what is it?

- What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?
- What's the worst job you've ever had?
- Have you ever completed anything on your "bucket list"?
- If you could live anywhere in the world for a year, where would it be?
- If you could have someone follow you around all the time, like a personal assistant, what would you have them do?
- Would you rather live in the ocean or on the moon?
- Would you rather be the funniest or smartest person in the room?
- If your house was on fire, and everyone was safe, but you had 1 minute to gather 3 items, what would you choose?

CARE

All pastoral care needs will be facilitated by our team of local pastors and small group leaders.

VISIT > realchurch.info/care

GIVING

All gifts, tithes, and offerings will be given digitally and directly through the realchurch.info giving tab. No monies will be received at an Online Church Small Group. Group leaders will be given a "WAYS WE GIVE" image to share digitally via airdrop or text message.